

HOW TO PICK COTTON



Emergency Farm Labor Leaflet

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HOW TO PICK COTTON

Cotton picking begins during the warm October days and continues on into the cooler weather of February. As the season changes some of the rules for picking may change. The following information is prepared for the purpose of helping the inexperienced cotton picker.

Cotton pickers are expected to furnish their own sack. Men use a 12-foot sack; women and children a 10-foot or shorter sack. If the sack is painted at the lower end where it drags on the ground, it will not wear out as fast. Some workers carry the sack by slipping the strap over their head and across the shoulder. Carry the sack on the side that is easier for you to fill.

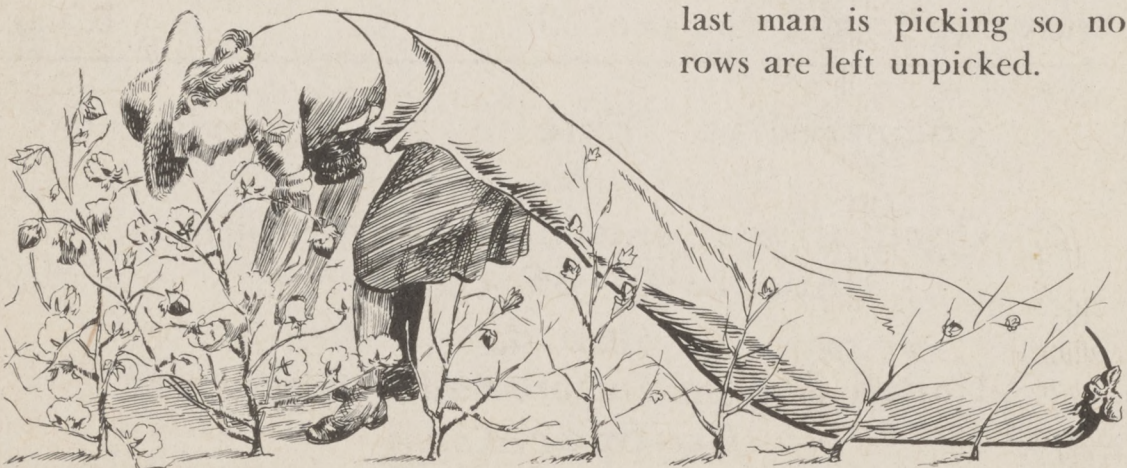


Many pickers carry the sack tied around the waist and drag it between their legs as they pick two rows. On short cotton some fast pickers straddle one row and drag the sack from the shoulder, as shown above. Where one row is being picked from one side and the sack is suspended from the shoulder, have the mouth of the sack on the opposite side from the row to prevent trash getting into the sack.

Before starting to pick, rip open the seam across the bottom of the sack and then close it with a strap or rope.

THE ROWS — The easiest way is to go to the far end of the row or block to start picking your row. Work toward the trailer as you fill the sack.

Very short rows will need to be worked back and forth. Determine which rows the last man is picking so no rows are left unpicked.



COTTON BOLLS



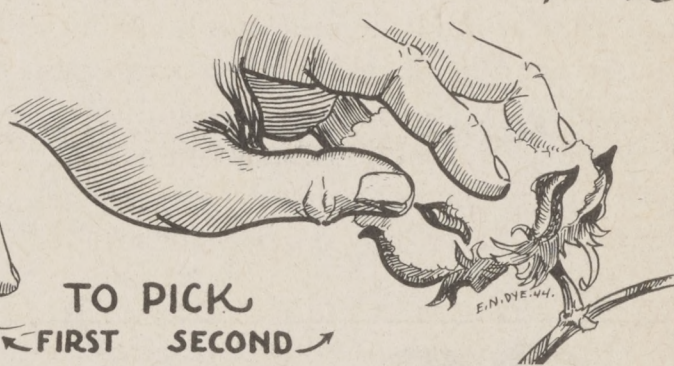
Immature green boll. Leave bolls like this at the first picking to mature and dry.



A dry mature boll. Notice that it has five locks. There is one lock for each finger of the hand to grasp. Use all five fingers for fast picking.



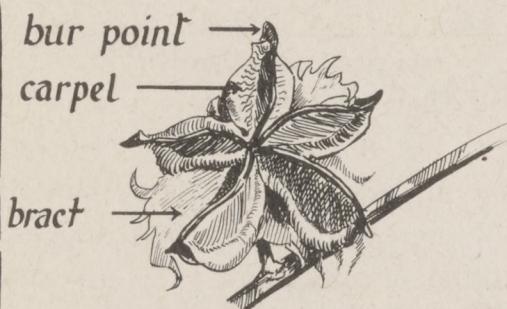
Place your fingers completely over the boll; then draw the hand back slightly as the fingers drop in between the bur points.



Grasp all five locks firmly with the finger tips as you pull the locks out with a quick side twist. A slow pull often leaves some cotton.

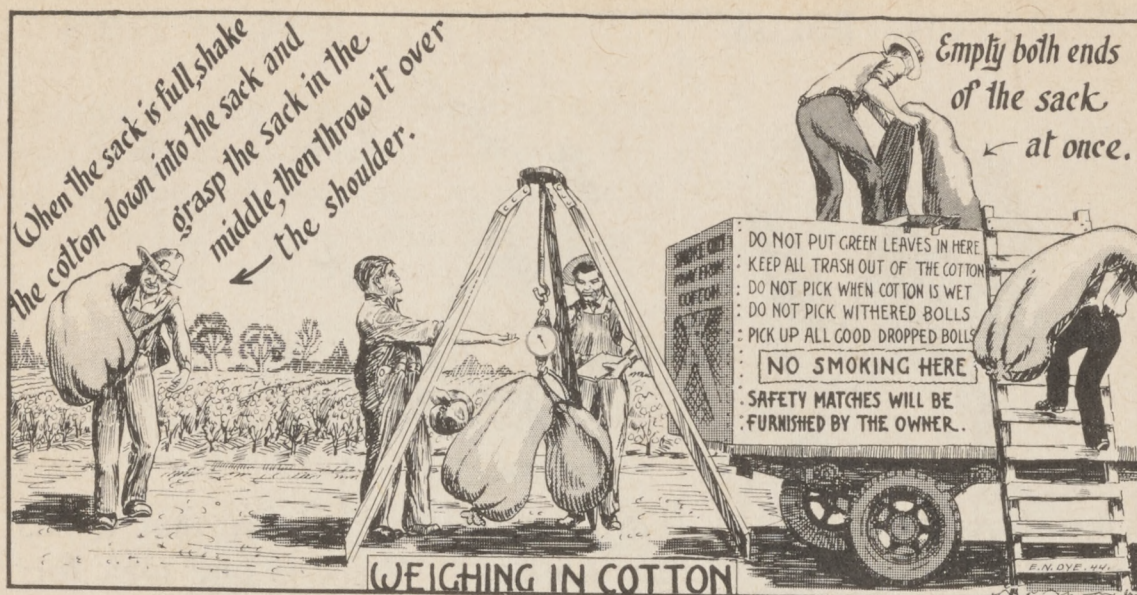
PICK FOR SPEED

Work with both hands close together. Picking the bottom of the plant first is found to be the best method. Pick a handfull of bolls before emptying hand. Do not pass small bits of cotton from one hand to the other. Remove burs when the hands are full by grasping bur stem with the teeth. The fastest pickers stand stooped to pick. Kneeling slows the work 15 to 25%. Picking with 3 fingers will slow you up. Work at a regular steady pace.



COTTON BUR

If the bur points irritate the finger tips it is common practice to saturate a 2-inch sponge with glycerine and 2% phenol. Attach to the hat and apply half-hourly. Use for slick fingers also. Wrap bad fingers with adhesive tape.



Carry the sack in to the scales. With the sack on the shoulder place the scale rope around the sack and hook onto the scales. Slip out from under the sack and hook the shoulder strap onto the hook. Secure a weigh tag. Take the sack on the shoulders and carry it up the trailer ladder and out onto the 2 x 12 plank. Open bottom end of sack and shake contents from both ends at the same time by jerking sack up and down. Never smoke at the trailer. Carry only safety matches.



Green Boll

Withered Boll

A good dry "Bolly"

SNAPPING COTTON AND PICKING BOLLIES.

SNAPPING — In January and February the bur stems are brittle and break off when the cotton locks are pulled out. If the owner or foreman suggest it, pick the whole boll by snapping off the stem and place the burs and cotton in the sack together. Snap the stems off close to the boll.

"BOLLIES" — Late in January and February there may remain some late bolls that will never thoroughly open. These "bollies" may open partly and dry out enough to produce good locks of cotton. If the "bolly" is thoroughly dry and has cracked open at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch, then it can be picked and the gin can separate the cotton.

If the "bolly" is closed up, do not pick it; the cotton will be immature and useless. Do not pick withered bollies with blasted cotton.